

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to thank you and to thank Mr. Pallone for his kind words.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my wife Adrienne, my step daughter Tara, my friends and especially my neighbors in the 13th Congressional District of New Jersey, who have honored me by allowing me to represent them in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, when I left Cuba with my family forty five years ago, I could never have envisioned that I would be standing on the floor of the House of Representatives to give this speech.

This day for me truly embodies the promise of this nation, the promise of its founders, the promise to its many immigrant communities.

The promise which means that anyone, no matter the circumstances of birth or class, can rise to become a member of the greatest democratic body in history.

Mr. Speaker, it was the community of West New York that welcomed me and my family so many years ago when we fled Cuba.

I have tried every day to give back to my neighbors for their generosity - first as a teacher and a coach and then as a mayor and as a state Assemblyman.

The people of the 13th District have provided me with the greatest privilege of all: to represent them in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the honor and the privilege of serving in the House of Representatives and the faith that my constituents have placed in me by sending me here on their behalf.

It is the trust of the people of New Jersey that has enabled me to be here today and I intend to honor that trust every day that I serve as their representative.

Thank you.

(####)